RESTORATION REVIEW

The Restoration Mind . . .

RESTORATION AND THE GRACE OF GOD

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Insofar as the Restoration Movement in this country is concerned, the Campbell-Stone aspect of the movement, it has come up short in reference to preaching the gospel of the *grace* of God. It is not so much that we have taught a *cheap* grace, a charge often leveled against some sects, but that we have hardly taught grace at all. What we have taught has had its negative ring, designed to show that salvation is not "wholly by grace" or by "faith only," but that there is something for man to do, some work for him to perform, as a kind of partner in God's plan.

In a survey of our literature back through the years it is difficult to find anything written in a positive way about the grace of God in the salvation of the soul. A favorite topic through the years has been something like "Things That Save," in which grace and mercy are listed along with works and baptism. While admitting that man is not saved by his own works, we have somehow woven a doctrine of works into the fabric and have left the impression that there is more required than mere grace. Elder Ben Franklin's sermon on "Men Must Do Something to Be Saved," published by Daniel Sommer back in 1896, certainly has much truth, and it is typical of "Campbellite preaching," and yet in the light of what the Bible teaches about grace it is a dangerous emphasis. This sermon, like so many others through the years, emphasizes a *human* side to salvation as well as a divine side. Brother Franklin, after recounting what God has done for our salvation, speaks of "the small amount he requires of man."

H. G. Harward, an Austrian evangelist, in his *Evangelistic Sermons,* first published in 1905, has a sermon on "The Chain of Salvation," which makes much of this human and divine side of salvation. The "chain" that saves has ten divine links and eight human links, including *we save ourselves* and *baptism.* And yet on the divine side he has *grace* listed, the prooftext being Eph. 2:8, which not only says that we are saved "by grace through faith," but also insists that salvation is not of ourselves!

Twelve books of sermons by our

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Twelve books of sermons by our pioneers that I have in my library total 249 addresses. There is not even one of the 249 that has the word grace in the title. That certainly does not mean that there is no grace of God preached in those messages, but when one sees the scores of sermons on baptism, conversion, the plan of salvation, and the church there is reason to conclude that however "Paul oriented" our movement has been, we have not caught the excitement that Paul had over the grace of God.

If one were to take the more recent sermons, all the way from Hardeman's *Tabernacle Sermons* to the *ACC Lectures,* he would find the same emphasis. One notices the same dearth of treatment given to the Holy Spirit, who, like the subject of grace, is given mostly negative consideration. We have hardly been "long on grace," as one of our premillennial brothers has been dubbed. The premillennial wing of discipledom is, by the way, one area of our movement where the grace of God has really been proclaimed. One of our young princes, something of a maverick, was introduced to a Dallas area congregation by an orthodox brother as "a fanatic on grace." Perhaps one could be a fanatic on that subject as well as any, but one thing is sure, we have not had many such fanatics.

Human frailty being what it is. we are not without reasons as to why this graceless thing happened to us. Part of it was surely the Lockean empiricism of Alexander Campbell in his struggle to negate the influence of an extreme Calvinism on the American frontier. Man is more than a corpse awaiting the influence of the Spirit and effectual grace to arouse him, Campbell rightly urged. The pioneers rejected "faith only" because this was made to mean that there is no meaning at all to one's response to the gospel. They probably could have agreed that salvation is most certainly by faith alone, once they saw alike the biblical concept of faith.

That our Movement has been influenced by the pragmatic philosophy of American culture is probably another reason why we have not really seen the grace of God. We have always been a do-it-yourself people, bequeathed to us by the rugged individualism of the colonial fathers and the raw-boned independence of the western frontier. What is more consistent for red-blooded Americans than to have a do-it-yourself religion? The reformed churches, both Lutheran and Calvinistic, could have saved us from our self-assertiveness, for they had European ties that helped them to keep the cross of Jesus in proper perspective. But we cut ourselves off from such influences, or were cut off by them, due to the exclusiveness that soon came to characterize us. To be sure, we had some things to teach "the sects," but we were so busy skinning them that we overlooked the fact that they also had a lot to teach us.

But as important as any reason for our being short on grace is the human proclivity to do it for oneself, which is why *all* churches fall short of giving proper place to the grace of God. Because of our self-will it is most difficult for us not to suppose that God needs some help in this matter of saving us. From childhood we have asserted ourselves with a "let me do it myself' to the point that we are hardly ready to turn our souls (completely over to God's grace. We give lip service to salvation by grace, and we boldly quote "Our righteousness is as filthy rags," but it is something else for us to really believe that salvation is by *pure grace,* apart from anything that we might do to merit it.

A noble exception to the dearth on grace in our Movement, especially in Churches of Christ, is the writings of K. C. Moser, who authored *The Gist of Romans* and *The Way of Salvation*, both of which stand in bold contrast to what is usually taught about grace and salvation (and even baptism) among us. Back in 1933 G. C. Brewer, one of the greats of the past generation, wrote the introduction for *The Way of Salvation*, in which he admits that Moser's views are not "the accepted view" or "the brotherhood idea," and that he might even be criticized for being Baptistic. After agreeing with what Moser says, including the point that repentance *precedes* faith, he goes on to say:

> In showing that man can and must obey God in order to be saved, some of us have run to the extreme of making salvation depend on works. Some have been wont to show that there is a human side and a divine side to salvation, and in doing so they have made the human coordinate with the divine. Worse, in the minds of some the divine has been completely ruled out and salvation made a matter of human achievement — except that the "plan" was divinely given. The gospel was made a system of divine laws for human beings to obey and thus save themselves sans grace, sans mercy, sans everything spiritual and divine — except that the "plan" was in mercy given! Mercy to expect man of his own unaided strength to save himself by meeting the demands of a system of perfect divine laws!

Brother Brewer also praises Moser's chapter on "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," acknowledging that it is likely to be criticized. The treatment certainly departs from the old bromides that "the Spirit is the Bible" or "the Spirit operates only through the Word," for it sets forth what the Spirit actually does in the life of the saint. This emphasis on the Spirit, one will find, goes with an emphasis upon grace. Where one is lacking, so is the other. When Christians come to see the place of grace, they come also to see the role of the Spirit in their lives.

The words of Rom. 5:20 shows where the apostle placed grace: "Where sin was thus multiplied, grace immeasurably exceeded it." Or as some versions have it: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The first rendering brings out what the second does not, that there are two different Greek words for *abound*, making it mean something like *Where sin overflowed, grace flooded in.* Or maybe *Where sin was finite, grace was infinite.* It means that grace overflows for us all, regardless of the measure of our sin. God does not give more grace to one and less to another, depending on the degree of his sin. God never says, "This is an average man, with an ordinary amount of sin, so I will give him an average amount of grace." God's grace overflows, saving us even when sin is abundant in our lives, and it is abundant in us all.

Grace does not merely supply our deficiencies, taking up wherever we may leave off in the struggle for wholeness. Grace creates a new life within us, providing us with resources that would never be ours otherwise. It does not come to us because we are good or for anything we have done, but because of his infinite love for us. It is not given as a part payment for some good work on our part, for there is no sense in which we can either buy it or deserve it. “If it be by grace, then it does not rest on deeds done, or grace would cease to be grace” (Rom. 11:6). It is the proclivity of man’s ego to cling to something he has done, however minute, as a cooperative act or as part payment for salvation, thus making void the grace of God. Man is inclined to usurp the crown that belongs to’ grace alone, thus enthroning his own self-will as the ruler of his heart. Notice Rom. 5:21: “As sin established its reign by way of death, so God’s grace might establish its reign in righteousness, and insure in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Paul here speaks of two queens that rule in men’s lives. True, sin once had such an upper hand that it looked as if the whole drama of creation would be swept away by it, beginning with Adam’s transgression. But God in His love would not allow that all be lost. His grace made possible another ruler in the human heart. Sin will rule or grace will rule. The choice becomes ours. But the choice is based only upon our faith, which is *trust* in Jesus as Saviour. “It is by grace you are saved, through trusting him; it is not your own doing. It is God’s gift, not a reward for work done.” (Eph. 2:8)

So eager is man to have some part in saving himself that it is an easy thing to pervert the doctrine of grace. Lest we forget that it was a perversion of the teaching on grace that led Paul to say in Gal. 1:8: “If anyone, if we ourselves or an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel at variance with the gospel we, preached to you, he shall be held outcast.” He insisted that they had been “called by grace,” and that any reliance upon law or self-assertion meant to “fallout of the domain of God’s grace” (Gal. 5:4). The modern church needs to ask itself that arresting question: *Are we really preaching the gospel?* It is something less than the gospel when we suggest that man himself has something to do, at least a little something to do, with his salvation. Man’s pride hardly prepares him to accept God’s grace, pure and simple.

Our illustrations betray us. We say that God shows His grace toward us and thus saves us like a governor issues a pardon to a convict and thus frees him. This is hardly *pure grace*, for a governor pardons in view of the punishment the convict has already suffered or because the penalty was too severe or because the man wasn’t guilty to start with. We *are* guilty before God, and it is only because of what Christ has done for us that God shows His grace. Indeed, Jesus *is* that grace. “The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all mankind,” says Tit. 2:11 in a reference to Jesus.

If one should go to the governor and take upon himself all the penalty due the convict, along with the guilt of the convict, and paying it all by going to prison himself, that would be pure grace. No one could say that in accepting such love and thus walking out of the prison a free man, the convict in some sense merited his freedom, and yet this can be the only sense that the scriptures would employ such language as "Save yourselves." Man responds to the grace, of course, if it is to be effectual, but this makes him no co-worker with God in some kind of "plan of salvation."

In reference to illustrations, one that comes from the Restoration literature referred to above seems to have the right ring in reference to grace. James A. Harding was in a debate with John H. Nichols back in 1888. The proposition was justification by faith only, which of course brother Harding was denying. In his first reply to his opponent he says, "Mr. Nichols seems to have a great horror of buying his salvation. He seems to think that one cannot do anything at all in order to justification without thereby paying for it. He seems to think that if one must, in addition to exercising internally a loving, trusting faith, also express that faith by some external action, he thereby pays for his justification." He goes on to point out that should a neighbor say to him "Come to my house tomorrow and bring a bridle with you, I have a horse I want to give you," he surely would not suppose that in bringing a bridle he would be paying for the horse. According to Nichols' notion of faith, he would have to fall on his knees and beg the man for a bridle, lest in bringing a bridle he pay for the horse. Nor could he even go to the pasture and catch the horse, lest in catching him he'd be paying for him!

There may be some question as to how well such illustrations, taken from human experience, fit the divine economy, but I am impressed with the validity of Harding's point. It well shows that "the free gift of God" does call for response on man's part, and that the responding is not itself a work. I especially like the way brother Harding spoke of "trusting faith expressing itself in some external action," which is where he places baptism. Baptism is the response of faith, indeed an act of faith rather than something apart from it. So that when Paul says, "By grace you are saved through faith," he speaks of a faith that expresses itself in obedience.

We have erred through the years, I think, in leaving the impression that baptism is something we do *after* we believe, as if it were the next step in some program that leads to salvation. It wrongly implies that one completes one step, and once it is attended to, he moves on to the next. As in the case of the man offered the free horse, there was no awareness of *steps,* for it was all a matter of trusting faith on his part. He believed the man would really give him a horse, so he took his bridle and went after it. This is why brother Harding was right, as a reading of the debate reveals, in dealing with the *kind of faith* that the scriptures talk about. There is no biblical faith except an obeying, trusting faith. So it is

true that for one to be saved he must have sufficient faith to do what the Lord expects of him.

This is why we can say with Luther and Protestant thought in general that man *is* saved by faith only. He is not saved by faith plus works, nor by faith *plus* anything. It is only by faith, remembering that all that the Lord command us is an expression of that faith. I have no quarrel with the *Good News for Modern Man* when it translates Rom. 1:17 "faith alone." I would only insist that faith be seen as that simple trusting response on man's part to what the Lord has commanded him. This is the faith that Paul equates with grace. "By his grace you are saved, through trusting him; it is not your own doing. It is God's gift, not a reward for work done." — *the Editor*

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HIGH ADVENTURE AT PAT BOONE'S HOUSE

A bumper sticker on one of the cars in the Pat Boone family in Beverly Hills reads *Jesus Is High Adventure.* For one walking along Beverly Drive one Friday evening in November, there would be a distinct impression of something exciting going on at the Boone's, to be sure, but he might not know just how to account for it. Cars occupied all the parking space up and down the long block on both sides. People of distinction, Jews and Gentiles alike, were making their way into the spacious home. Some 75 persons were gathered in the large den for some kind of powwow. And it wouldn't end, for at midnight it was only getting started. At 2:30 a.m. folk started falling into the family swimming pool, or something, with or without their clothes on. Just another wild Hollywood party where folk have had too much to drink, the observer might suppose. But he would no doubt be puzzled by the shouts of *Hallelujah!* from the swimming pool, especially if he drew close enough to see men burying others in water in the name of the Messiah. He might think, *The stuff people drink these days!,* but he might think something else, even if it is Beverly Hills.

My mini-meetings in California had but one night to go and I was looking forward to the flight home late that same night. Harry Bucalstein, who labors with the Board of Missions to the Jews, was my companion that day. He had taken me to meet Myron Taylor of the Westwood Hills Christian Church, and the three of us lunched together in the heart of the Jewish community in Los Angeles. A visit to Pepperdine College was on our agenda, but we didn't have time for it since we had to get back to Pomona for a meeting. But Harry thought I should call Pat Boone and say hello before returning to Texas. Pat invited us to his home that night, explaining that Arthur Katz was to be there giving a testimony of his work among the Jews and that part of the audience would be Jews. I

explained that if we attended we would have to arrive late, due to our commitment for the evening. He assured us that things would get started late, that Arthur himself had an earlier speaking appointment, and for us to come on when we could.

Harry and I had to park on another street due to the congestion around the Boone home. It was 10:30. A note on the front door read "Bell out of order. Please come on in." You would think that once inside one would have no trouble finding 75 people, but it took us awhile, wandering as we did through a dining room and a couple of living rooms. The den, perhaps 40 x 50, protruded from the central part of the house toward the swimming pool. Besides the 75 or so people that were gathered, there was room left for a pool table, a large oval study or dining table, and a fireplace semicircled by long couches.

Shirley Boone was dressed in a smart reddish hostess dress that reached her slippers, a dress made for her by Pat's secretary. Dangling from her neck on a stout chain was a large gold cross that hung to her mid-section. Her long silky hair was combed back, unlike her daughters who let their hair partially cover their pretty faces, allowing her comely features to radiate, especially as she shared in the testimonials of the evening. Pat too was dressed informally, wearing a white turtleneck sweater that accentuated his chestnut hair that has now grown surprisingly long, well down the neck but hardly to the shoulders. It gives him a classic look, something like Apollo, but by no means is he a *Longhair.*

As we took our seats Pat was standing with his back to the fireplace, reading from Acts, at some length, relative to apostolic preaching among the Jews, from *The Living Bible*, I believe. Then came several testimonials from Jewish believers, telling of their love for Jesus and their work among Jews. We then had the privilege of hearing Arthur Katz, author of the recently published *Ben Israel: Odyssey of a Modern Jew,* which is the story of his experience from rank atheism to Messianic faith. The chapter in that book that deals with his visit to Dachau in Germany, where he saw the remains of the concentration camp with its gas chambers and ovens that killed multiplied thousands of his Jewish people, is one of the most moving accounts I have ever read. It provides deep insight as to how a Jew himself feels about this gross indignity perpetrated against humanity. The scene that follows, with Katz riding a train across from a German soldier that he finds himself despising because of what he represented and yet identifying with him as a fellow sufferer when he sees the soldier has but artificial arms and legs, is as touching as anything Hemingway ever wrote. And it is a lesson in brotherhood to see these two, a German and a Jew, riding through Deutschland together, exchanging cigarettes and calling each other brother.

Arthur talks like his book reads, which is a call for total commitment to God. He insists that it is only as we cry out to God, with the desire of the panting hart for the water brook, that religious faith will have more than superficial meaning. He compares faith in God to marriage, observing that if there is not *wholehearted commitment* (his chief emphasis)

there is no real value. He is a man of deep sensitivities who doesn't just *say* anything, for every utterance has a sense of urgency about it. He is a man of action, and so his testimony has to do with what God has done or is now doing through him and others. He is also an example of how the gospel changes people's lives. He admits to once having actually hated the name of Jesus, but he who once hated now loves with a heart aflame.

Art is suffering persecution from the very ones he seeks to help, his own Jewish people. Even at UCLA, where he once taught and where he had recently witnessed to Jewish youth about Jesus, he was met with an indescribable hatred. It is not unusual when people actually spit upon him and shake their fists at him. There must be something to the gospel, he figures, or it would not be opposed so vehemently.

Arthur Katz is charismatic in that he believes he has been baptized of the Holy Spirit and has received some of the special gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12, including, if I understand him correctly, both the gift of tongues and the gift of healing. But the meeting that night was not charismatic in that there was none of this. It was a quiet sharing session where there was hardly an audible *Amen.*

Arthur and Pat both emphasized the importance of praying for people to be saved. Art told of how a woman had come to him once after a lecture, telling him that she had long been praying for his salvation. Shocked and even resentful at the time, he now looks to the power that came from her prayers as the motivating force in his conversion to Jesus. Pat told us of a young lady named Rebecca, present that night, an Illinois farm girl that he had not met before. She read Pat's book *'Twixt Twelve and Twenty* in her early teens, and then began praying for Pat Boone, regularly, that he might be a *real* Christian, feeling somehow that he might not be fully committed. Pat was touched by this, and shared with Art the conviction that this kind of concern for one's soul makes a difference with God.

Once Art was through with his part of the sharing, Pat proceeded to explain to those gathered that once a person comes to accept Jesus as Lord, he is to be baptized. He went on to read the story of Philip and the eunuch, explaining that the one who seeks Jesus is to do as the eunuch did. At this point Harry leaned over to me and whispered playfully "That Campbellite!" I had to admit that Pat was hardly behaving as the apostate he is suppose to be. If that is the way people are going to behave when we kick them out of the Church of Christ, then I say let's run off a lot of others!

While there was nothing akin to an "invitation," it was soon apparent that several had asked to be immersed. By this time we were dismissed and moving toward the family baptistery, which is sometimes used for swimming, a place where some 200 people have been baptized into Jesus in recent years. Art first immersed 5 or 6 people, mostly Jews, calling upon the Lord in Hebrew as he did so. Perhaps from lack of experience, Art is not the smooth immerser that Pat is, who afterwards immersed another person or two, for

several times he failed to bury the person completely in the water, allowing an arm or part of the shoulders to remain above the water.

My mind went back to my days at Freed-Hardeman College when one of the teachers immersed a student but allowed part of an arm to remain unburied. It caused such a stir that the act had to be repeated some days later, and that time she was completely buried, every whit, to everyone's satisfaction. I was very young then, and I supposed that if she didn't make it into Christ the first time, surely she did the second time around. But it made for lively discussion in the bull sessions as to what would have happened to her had she died between the first and second time around!

Anyway, the people that night were being gloriously delivered from one form of legalism, and I was not interested in introducing them to another. I was ready to receive them as immersed believers and as my brothers and sisters in the Lord. It was a beautiful example of Jews and Gentiles together becoming a part of the new humanity. And what a sight it was to see those Jews in that swimming pool being baptized into the Messiah of Israel. I looked into the starlit California sky and thanked God for what my eyes were seeing and hearing. It was indeed high adventure!

But one Jew being baptized was not content to praise God as quietly as I was. When Pat immersed him, he shouted *Hallelujah!* so loudly that he could be heard all the way to Jack Benny's house. Then he embraced Pat, continuing to thank God for Jesus. It was just great!

On and on it went into the wee hours, with people showing their love for each other and rejoicing in God. There were three Church of Christ ministers present that night, friends of the Boones from former years, who, I think, were more sympathetic than otherwise, and who certainly contributed to the quality of the occasion by their own graciousness. Pat and Shirley seemed to be especially pleased that they were there. We agreed that what we had witnessed at the Boone's that night could not and would not have happened at any of our Churches of Christ across the land, and not likely at any other church for that matter. Isn't it glorious what God can do through heretics like Pat Boone and Art Katz?

In talking with one of the Jews who was immersed that night, I learned that what had brought him to Jesus was the love he saw in those that professed his name, the love they had for one another and for him. I thought of the words of the Lord: "Hereby shall men know that you are my disciples, because you love one another." Pat later told me that the man with whom I was talking was a TV script writer of considerable importance.

A few nights before there had been an even larger gathering in the Boone home, mostly Jews, where Art and Pat witnessed of their faith in the Messiah, which helped set the stage for what happened this night. This mission to the Jews came as one of those surprises from the Lord. One of the Boone girls won one of her Jewish friends at school for the Lord.

Because of Oral Roberts' several trips to Israel and his apparent sympathy for the Jews, the girl wanted him to baptize her. But Oral wanted Pat to do it. Pat insisted that Oral should do this for the girl, so Oral takes the girl into the Boone pool on a cold, rainy day and immerses her into the Lord. Now, isn't that a blessed scene, Oral Roberts immersing that Jewish girl in a backyard swimming pool. Oral later told Pat that the experience had been good for him, that it was the first Jew he had ever baptized. Anyway, they started it, a schoolgirl talking to her friend about Jesus, and from her to others.

I had long since missed my flight back to Dallas, so I had to bid Harry Bucalstein adieu and yield myself to the good graces of the Boones to get me to the airport a few hours later. It was already morning and I saw little reason to bother with going to bed, but my hosts thought that there would be time if I took a late morning departure. But I was up again in a few hours, enjoying a walk around Beverly Hills while my hosts rested awhile longer. I noticed that there were several fine homes in that area for sale, with neat little signs saying so, and I concluded that movie stars and film producers are having as hard a time of it these days as are college professors and aerospace engineers.

Time also allowed me to get acquainted with the family dog and the cats and to stroll around the grounds. After awhile here came a maid and a housekeeper to clean up from the night before. Said the black sister from Selma, Alabama: "Well, I hear there were some baptizings here last night." I assured her that it had really been a wild party. I was thinking that her remark must be a *first*, for imagine a maid coming in after an all-night Hollywood party to clean up and start talking about how many had been baptized.

But that illustrates how Pat and Shirley are glorifying God in their lives and in their home. All across the land their light illumines many lives, and that includes the girls, for they are all together a family witness for God in the home. On the piano were autographed pictures, with words of respect and love, from the likes of Jonathan Winters, Carol Channing, Bob Hope, and the most recent of all, one of the Boones with Richard and Pat Nixon at the White House. Thousands of such leaders across 'the country now know the Boones as people who really love Jesus and who allow him to make all the difference in the world in their lives.

Pat told me one story that illustrates this point, and I think it is all right to pass it along. When Pat and the family were special guests on the Flip Wilson Show, Flip departed from the script at the beginning of the act and said to the Boones, "Y'all Christians?" Taken aback by the unexpected, Pat knew only to smile and say yes. "Well, you *look* like Christians!," said Flip. Pat was pleased to be so identified, for all through their part of the show they could be seen for what they love most to be, friends of Jesus. The show that night had an unusually high rating, with something like 50 million Americans looking on!

Pat and Shirley still love us in the Church of Christ and still think of themselves as part of us. They return occasionally to the Inglewood congregation, the one that excluded them, to assure their friends there of their love, which is in turn joyously reciprocated. And they still love Jim Bales and speak of him with respect. The preachers that were there that night told me that Pat and Shirley had sent flowers to brother Bales while he was in the hospital, and that dear J. D. was so touched that he wept. Thank God for tender scenes like that.

Pat finally got rid of me at the airport, assuring me along the way that God has strengthened him in all his ordeals and that he can now see light at the end of the tunnel. Everything is going to be all right, despite all the rocky roads. I had to share with him what God had done for me and Ouida in the fried chicken business, making me rich, *peanut* rich perhaps by Beverly Hills' standards, but rich to me. Pat slapped his knee with delight and rejoiced with me. He is certainly a fine person and a delightful Christian, one aglow with God's Spirit. That goes for Shirley too. And the four girls, they are something else. Before long, if Pat and Shirley do not watch, they will become famous the world over as the parents of the Boone girls!

On the flight back to my home state I had to admit to myself that California has one thing over Texas. Anything can happen in California, and thanks to folk like Pat and Shirley it usually does. And I am now a believer in bumper stickers, if not before. Jesus *is* high adventure! — *the Editor*

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I WOULD ABDICATE!

The story is told about Ludwig von Mises, the great economist, when he was asked what he would do about the economy, conditions being as unfavorable as they were, if he by some fate were made dictator of the United States. His immediate reply: *I would abdic-ate!*

I want to ride coattail on that idea in reference to my own role in the current efforts to restore unity, brotherhood and love to our divided ranks in Churches of Christ and Christian Churches. I am part of the fellowship of the concerned ones in that I want something done about our lack of oneness. I am editing this journal and traveling over the country because I care and because I believe that Jesus' prayer for the unity of his people is glorious to anticipate. I have hope and so I am at work. The church *can* be one, and the place for us to start in realizing that unity is in our own ranks and among our own people. Once this is realized, we will have an important witness to make to the world. Jesus' words should sober us: "Hereby shall men know that you are my disciples, because you love one another."

It is only in this sense that I think of myself as a reformer. I am not out to save the brotherhood, nor to conform anyone else to my way of thinking. I do not presume to know all the answers. I only want to help our people to become freer and more responsible in their relationship to the religious world. It is not important that they think like me, but it is important that they *think.* Change is in order, though I don't presume to dictate those changes. We must become more responsible, but I would not be so irresponsible as to lay down all the rules, I only want to be part of the answer, and I hope that this journal may be a channel through which possible answers will be explored. Our brotherhood needs to become a vast open forum, and I wish to contribute what I can to that end.

The best way for any of us to help solve the problems we face is to be busy improving ourselves. Reformation begins within each of us, with each one making those changes that the light of his own conscience dictates. God forbid that we keep on sitting in judgment on one another. If each of us will make of himself, by God's help, part of that light that shines in the world, then our ministry will be to those who love light more than darkness, people who are drawn to us because of the light we have.

One cultivated in Christian graces will not impose himself on others. He will not be so rude nor presumptuous as to try to remake people into his own image. He will not be out to judge them nor to show them how wrong they are. He will not even be aggressive in presenting his own viewpoint. Rather he will be busy attending to his own affairs, setting his own house in order, and holding a candle in his own little corner of our darkened world. Those who seek light will find their way to him. This was the way Jesus did, you know. He was always a gentleman, never imposing himself nor his views on anyone. He did things like go into the hills and pray all night, keeping his relationship with God in good repair. And yet people flocked to him for wisdom, for light, for healing. Jesus must have been something like Ludwig von Mises in that even if they had made him the dictator over their lives, so that every annoying detail would, 'have been settled by the nod of his head, he would have abdicated.

Here I take my stand. If by some fate I were made dictator over the Churches of Christ, so that every change I long for would readily come to pass at my command, I would abdicate. I do not want to win by enslaving men, but by freeing them. Real victory is not mastery over men's minds, but the defeat of those things that tyrannize men's minds.

Our differences will not be settled by anyone party among us arrogating to itself the power of judging all others. We are each prone to say of the other, when he dares to see things different from ourselves, that he doesn't know as we know or that he doesn't love as we love. Editorials in some of our journals charge that those who see the Bible, or the Bible's *silence* as the case may be, different from the editor do not really respect the authority of the Bible. To respect the authority of the scriptures is to interpret as I interpret, is what that says. We even impugn people's motives if they see other than we see. If they

are knowledgeable, then they must be insincere, if they differ from us. It is, after all, merely a matter of taking the Bible for what it says or for what it doesn't say! We little realize that "what the Bible says" is what we, in our sectarian littleness, make it say.

The issue really is not who knows more or who loves more or who respects the Bible more. The issue is whether I am to sit in judgment of you or you of me. It is a question of which of our parties will presume to serve as the supreme court for all the rest of us. Suppose we establish a judgment seat somewhere in the brotherhood — at Abilene or Nashville or Amarillo or Louisville or Lufkin — so that all our differences will be resolved and unity realized. Which of our parties will assume to serve as the supreme court? If such were proffered, the wisdom of von Mises would be in order, abdication.

When the apostle Paul deals with the problem of difference between Christians in Romans 14 this is really what he calls for, *abdication of judgment.* Several times he says such as "Who are you to pass judgment on someone else's servant?," and "Let us therefore cease judging one another." He is saying that we are to dethrone ourselves as judge and enthrone God, for it is God who is Master over men's souls and not ourselves. Paul's answer is a "To each his own" approach, for in this way one is responsible in his own conscience to God and no one else. This is the freedom we all should seek, to be responsible for our beliefs, whether to their sincerity or their soundness, only to God and ourselves.

This is the wisdom of Paul's words: "It is before his own master that he stands or falls." Maybe he is not sincere. Maybe he does have ulterior motives. But it is not for us to judge for the simple reason that we are not his master. His own conscience is his supreme court and God is his only judge.

Even if a brother should make us the master of his thought and the judge of his life, we should abdicate. — *the Editor*

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An Open Letter . . .

TO DISCIPLES, INDEPENDENTS, AND CHURCHES OF CHRIST

James L. Christensen

One would assume that ministers would have their closest associations and kinship with those of their common family heritage. Yet, I have had scarcely no opportunities to know my brethren of the Church of Christ, and seldom my Independent colleagues. Yet, all of us quote the same spiritual fathers and the same Lord.

One would assume that congregations, historically rooted in the spirit, attitudes and yearnings of Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, would consciously work together as partners in Christ. In reality, however, the Christian Churches (Disciples), the Christian Churches (Independents), and the Churches of Christ have few, if any, association with each other. What tragedy!

How would Thomas Campbell view his spiritual progency?

Surely our separateness would be offensively disillusioning, not only to Thomas Campbell, but Alexander his son, Walter Scott and Barton Stone, the other fathers of our movement. They themselves found a common ground for fraternity among their many followers in the shared yearning for Christian togetherness, in sensitivity to the sinfulness of the divisive spirit, and in a Christ-centered, New Testament faith. If there is any validity to our forefathers' claims at all, and if they have any significant contribution to the religious scene today, we who have sprung from such noble roots should be able to transcend our religious differences! Before confronting the religious world with a plea for Christian restoration and unity, we need at least to try to get ourselves together — otherwise we merit the denunciation, "Physician, heal thyself". The scandal and disgrace of the Campbell-Stone movement has been the inability to keep the family together.

To our shame, the prayer of our Lord, "I pray that they may be one, even as thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee . . . that the world may believe," (John 17:20) and the thought and philosophy of the Campbells and Stone have not been a sufficient bond to keep us together. A travesty indeed. Perhaps a new breed of young ministers of these three groups, and more mature, flexible and responsible church men can bring in a new day of witness for the Campbell-Stone ideas "whose time has come". Perhaps the family can be united again.

The last fifteen years has occasioned numerous "Internal Unity" conferences between Disciples and Independents, Independents and Churches of Christ. Also voices of concern have been echoed in the printed word of publishing companies of each persuasion. The World Convention of Churches of Christ, meeting every five years, is an umbrella under which fellowship and study is possible and has been partially realized for the historic family. These efforts have created limited bridges of fellowship and opened discussions that have led to increased understanding, tolerance, empathy, flexibility, and a desire to pursue unity, especially among the younger ministers. Regretfully, little has resulted beyond talk. Many feel it is a hopeless and wasted effort. Surely such has not fallen on barren soil. The seed has found rootage, I am convinced, among many sensitive souls in all three major groups.

It is time for progress beyond talk, within the decision making leadership and program structures.

Surely there is sufficient Biblical heritage, theological commonness, Christian goodwill and historical purpose at least to merit an attempt to get together, to overcome the barriers, and unite our efforts. In the eyes of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, and our Lord Jesus Christ, the ties which unite us are far greater than the differences that divide us.

The Disciples have talked union with the American Baptists, the United Church of Christ and COCU. I for one would like to see consultation on reunion of the family — Independents, Church of Christ and Disciples. Isn't this possible even amid and retaining great diversities? Isn't this just as compelling as other conversations?

If Thomas Campbell's views have validity, surely it is a possibility!

The combined numerical strength, then, would approximate four million members. This would be a tremendous witness to the Christian world of a common legacy.

We all have to give to each other. We all could learn and receive much from the other and yet retain our own freedom and genius. The interpenetration of each segment with the other would be a "wholesome, growing experience" for each. Perhaps the Disciples need a greater appreciation for the Independents and Churches of Christ and what they contribute. At the same time perhaps the Churches of Christ need the perspective of the less rigid stance, and the Independents, the freedom within cooperative structure.

Can we bury in the sea of Christian love the issues that once divided us, and unite ourselves in the service of our common Lord?

By our separateness we betray the purpose of the Declaration and Address, the Magna Charta of the movement. Furthermore, we betray the very genius of our heritage, which was a Christ-centered faith. The demand has never been uniformity in thought or practice, but a common allegiance to the Person of Jesus as both Christ and Lord. We ought to pray for what He prayed for, and work at what He called us to work for — TOGETHER. (John 17:20).

We who talk so much about Christian love contradict in demonstration our basic profession. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another." Our relationships have been marred in the past from all three sides, with condescending attitudes, uncharitable criticism, suspicion, misinformation, self-righteous haughtiness, unwillingness to understand, and an attitude of isolation. The polarized camps became rigid, until we have become totally alienated from one another. Hence, some feel that unity among our family is beyond possibility.

Could we dare to disbelieve it? Could we who read this article, possibly engender a new spirit among our ministers and laity of mutual trust, respect, appreciation and fraternity?

Could we possibly respond favorably to the idea? Could we begin expressing the hope, and praying for the leading of the Holy Spirit? Could we capture the spirit of Thomas Campbell, the intellectual fervor of Alexander Campbell, the evangelistic passion of Walter Scott and the humble gentleness of Barton Stone?

Could we begin in the "grass roots" community with some communication and fraternization? Perhaps then the top echelons of leadership could enter into discussion. Impossible? Not if such unity is God's will! — *Lindenwood Christian Church, 40 East Parkway South, Memphis, Tn. 38104*

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READERS' EXCHANGE

BOOK NOTES

Two books that will hold special interest to you are by Robert Shank, who was for 20 years a Baptist minister but now with Churches of Christ. The volumes have to do with questions that disturbed the author while he was a Baptist, and yet they are of such breadth as to get to the very heart of the meaning of the gospel. *Life in the Son* is an examination of the doctrine of eternal security or "once saved always saved," known in theology as the doctrine of perseverance. No less a person than Dr. Adams, professor of New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who writes the Introduction, says that it is arresting and disturbing, a book to be reckoned with by all serious students of the Bible." The other volume, *Elect in the Son,* is a thorough treatment of the question of election. We recommend both of these volumes to you with enthusiasm. They are both beautifully bound and are substantial books, and for today's prices they are a bargain at 4.95 each.

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